Ruth's Reward—or, Cheer for Converts

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The Lord recompense your work, and a full reward be given you of the Lord God of Israel under whose wings you are come to trust." Ruth 2:12.

THIS was the language of Boaz, a man of substance and of note in Bethlehem, to a poor stranger of whom he had heard that she had left her kindred and the idols of her nation, that she might become a worshipper of the living and true God. He acted a noble part when he cheered her and bade her be of good courage, now that she was casting in her lot with Naomi and the chosen nation. Observe that he saluted her with words of tender encouragement, for this is precisely what I want all the elder Christians among you to do to those who are the counterparts of Ruth. You who have long been Believers in the Lord Jesus, who have grown rich in experience, who know the love and faithfulness of our Covenant God and who are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, I want you to make a point of looking out for the young converts and speaking goodly and comfortable words to them, whereby they may be cheered and strengthened. There is a text, a very short one, which I would like to often preach from in reference to those who are newly saved, and I would invite you to be continually practicing it. That text is, "Encourage him." So many throw cold water upon the aspirants after holiness that I would urge others of you to heartily cheer them. Where spiritual life is weak, it should be nurtured with affectionate care. We desire to cherish, not to censure. That the lambs may grow, they must be shepherded. That the tender babes in the household may become strong members of the Divine family, they must be nursed and fed. If Ruth is to be happy in the land of Israel, a Boaz must look after her and be her true friend. Let her nearest kinsmen be speedy in fulfilling this duty.

I have no doubt that much sorrow might be prevented if words of encouragement were more frequently spoken fitly and in season and, therefore, to withhold them is sin. I am afraid that many poor souls have remained in darkness, shut in within themselves, when two or three minutes' brotherly cheer might have taken down the shutters and let in the light of day. Many matters are real difficulties to young Believers, which are not difficulties to us who have been longer in the Way. You and I could clear up, in ten minutes' conversation, questions and doubts which cause our uninstructed friends months of misery. Why are we so reticent when a word would send our weaker Brothers and Sisters on their way rejoicing? Therefore I entreat all of you, whom God has greatly blessed, to look after those that are of low estate in spiritual things—try to cheer and encourage them. As you do this, God will bless you in return, but, if you neglect this tender duty, it may be that you,

yourselves, will grow despondent and be in need of friendly succor. Encouragement is due to young converts—every Ruth ought to be comforted when she casts in her lot with the people of God.

I think I can say for every Christian here that the young converts among us have our very best wishes. We desire for them every good and spiritual gift. It will be our wisdom to turn our kindly wishes into prayers. Wishes are lame, but prayer has legs, yes, wings, with which it runs and even flies, towards God! Wishes are baskets, but prayer fills them with bread! Wishes are clouds, but prayer is the rain! Look how Boaz, wishing well, as he did to the humble maiden from Moab, spoke with her and then spoke with God in prayer for her. I take it that my text is a prayer as well as a benediction—"Jehovah recompense your work, and a full reward be given you of Jehovah, God of Israel, under whose wings you are come to trust." Let us pray more than ever for the feeble-minded and the young! Think of them whenever the King grants you an audience. Search them out with kindly care, as a shepherd looks for his young lambs—and then lay them in the bosom of your love and carry them over rough places.

We would, in all probability, see a much more rapid growth in Grace among our young converts if they were better nursed and watched over. Some of us owed much to old, experienced Christians in our younger days. I know I did. I shall forever respect the memory of a humble servant in the school where I was usher, at New Market—an old woman who talked with me concerning the things of the Kingdom and taught me the way of the Lord more perfectly. She knew the Doctrines of Grace better than many a doctor of divinity and she held them with the tenacious grasp of one who found her life in them. It was my great privilege to help her in her old age and but a little while ago she passed away to Heaven. Many things did I learn of her which, today, I delight to preach! Let it be said of us, when we, too, grow old, that those who were children when we were young were helped by us to become useful in their riper years. They will not forget us if we have been to them what Aquila and Priscilla were to Apollos, or Ananias to Paul, or Paul to Timothy. They will pray for us and God will bless us in answer to their prayers when the grasshopper becomes a burden to us and our infirmities are multiplied.

Having thus introduced the text, let us notice in this model word of encouragement, what the convert has done that we should encourage him. Secondly, what that full reward is which he will receive. And, thirdly, following out the historical connection of the text, I should like to conclude by noticing what figure sets forth this full reward—a reward which we desire for every Ruth who has left those who were outside of the Covenant in Moab to come and join herself with the Israel of God—and the God of Israel.

I. First, then, WHAT HAS THE YOUNG CONVERT DONE? We illustrate the subject by the instance of Ruth. Many young converts deserve encouragement because they have left all their old associates. Ruth, no doubt, had many friends in her native country, but she

tore herself away to cling to Naomi and Naomi's God. Perhaps she parted from a mother and a father—if they were alive, she certainly left them to go to the Israelites' country. Possibly she bade adieu to brothers and sisters, certainly she left old friends and neighbors, for she resolved to go with Naomi and share her lot. She said, "Entreat me not to leave you, or to return from following after you: for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, will I die and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more, also, if anything but death parts you and me."

The young convert is an emigrant from the world and has become, for Christ's sake, an alien. Possibly he had many companions—friends who made him merry, after their fashion—men of fascinating manners who could easily provoke his laughter and make the hours dance by. But, because he found in them no savor of Christ, he has forsaken them and for Christ's sake, they have forsaken him. Among his old associates he has become as a speckled bird and they are all against him. You may, perhaps, have seen a canary which has flown from its home, where it enjoyed the fondness of its mis-tress—you may have seen it out among the sparrows. They pursue it as though they would tear it to pieces and they give it no rest anywhere. Just so the young convert—being no longer of the same feather as his comrades—is the subject of their persecution. He endures trials of cruel mockings and these are as hot irons to the soul. He is now, to them, a hypocrite and a fanatic—they honor him with ridiculous names by which they express their scorn. In their hearts they crown him with a fool's cap and write him down as both idiot and stupid. He will need to exhibit years of holy living before they will be forced into respect for him—and all this because he is quitting their Moab to join with Israel!

Why should he leave them? Has he grown better than they? Does he pretend to be a saint? Can he not drink with them as he once did? He is a protest against their excesses and men don't care for such protests. Can he not sing a jolly song as they do? Indeed, he has turned saint, and what is a saint but a hypocrite? He is a bit too precise and Puritanical and is not to be endured in their free society! According to the grade in life, this opposition takes one form or another, but in no case does Moab admire the Ruth who deserts her idols to worship the God of Israel.

It is not natural that the Prince of Darkness should care to lose his subjects, or that the men of the world should love those who shame them. Is it not most meet that you older Christian people, who have long been separated from the world and are hardened against its jeers, should step in and defend the newcomers? Should you not say, "Come with us and we will do you good—we will be better friends to you than those you have left. We will accompany you on a better road than that from which you have turned and we will find you better joys than worldlings can ever know"? When our great King is represented as saying to His spouse, "Forget, also, your own people and your father's house," He adds, "so shall

the King greatly desire your beauty, for He is your Lord." Thus He gives her new company to supply the place of that which she gives up.

Let us gather a hint from this and make a society for those whom the world casts out. Perhaps there has come into this house, at this time, a man or woman who has just rushed out of the City of Destruction, only too glad to be outside its walls. The poor soul does not know which way to run, only he knows that he must run away from his former evil place, for he finds that the city is to be destroyed. O Brothers and Sisters, while such fugitives are wondering which way to go and their evil companions are inviting them to return, step in and show them the true place of shelter! Run with them to the clefts of the Rock. Lift them up if they stumble! Guide them if they miss their way. Fend off their former tempters—form a bodyguard around them—escort them till they are out of immediate danger! Charm them with your loving conversation till they forget their false friends. When Ruth had left her former connections, it was wise and kind for Boaz to address her in the words of comfort which I will again quote to you—"The Lord recompense your work, and a full reward be given you of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you are come to trust."

Next, Ruth, having left her old companions, had come among strangers. She was not yet at home in the land of Israel, but confessed herself, "a stranger." She knew Naomi, but in the whole town of Bethlehem she knew no one else. When she came into the harvest field, the neighbors were gleaning, but they were no neighbors of hers—no glance of sympathy fell upon her from them—perhaps they looked at her with cold curiosity. They may have thought, "What business has this Moabitess to come here to take away a part of the gleaning which belongs to the poor of Israel?" I know that such feelings do arise among country people when a stranger from another parish comes gleaning in the field. Ruth was a foreigner and, of course, in their eyes, an intruder. She felt herself to be alone, though under the wings of Israel's God.

Boaz very properly felt that she should not think that courtesy and kindness had died out in Israel and he made a point, though he was by far her superior in station, to go to her and speak a word of encouragement to her. Should not certain of you follow the same practice? May I not call you to do so at once? There will come into our assemblies those that have been lately impressed with a sense of their guilt, or have newly sought and found the Savior—should they be suffered to remain strangers among us? Should not recognition, companionship and hospitality be extended to them to make them feel at home with us? I would sincerely assure any that have come to this Tabernacle for a time and are still unnoticed, that they are singularly unfortunate, for, as a rule, a stranger is looked after and, in every case, he will be welcomed.

If you have been overlooked, you must have been sitting in rather an odd part of the building, for certain of our friends give themselves to the work of hunting up newcomers and conversing with them—so much so that now and then I get complaints of their supposed

intrusion! Those complaints much delight me, for they show that earnestness still survives among us! Be prudent, gentle and courteous, of course, but do be on the watch for any who are seeking the Lord and are desirous to unite with His people! I have occasionally to hear a friend say, "Sir, I attended your ministry for months, but those who sat with me in the pew never took the slightest notice of me. I often wished they would, for I was really desirous to be led by the hand to the Savior."

I do not like to hear that accusation! I would infinitely rather that people should complain that you spoke too much of religion to them than that you never said a word! Your supposed intrusion might be greatly to your credit, but your silent indifference must be to your dishonor. Let us try, with all our hearts, to look upon every man that no single seeking soul shall feel itself deserted. Seekers should be spared the agony of crying, "No man cares for my soul!" Are you a Believer? Then you are my Brother. We are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God! We would lay ourselves out to bring our fellow men to Jesus and to aid new converts in finding perfect peace at His feet. Let us learn the art of personal address. Do not let us be so bashful and retiring that we leave others in sorrow because we cannot raise up our courage to say a kind and tender word in the name of the Lord Jesus. Come, let us pluck up courage and encourage every Ruth when she is timid among strangers. Let us help her to feel at home in Immanuel's land!

The new convert is like Ruth in another respect—he is very low in his own eyes. Ruth said to Boaz, "Why have I found grace in your eyes, that you should take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" She said again, "Let me find favor in your sight, my lord, because you have comforted me and because you have spoken friendly unto your handmaid, though I am not like one of your handmaidens." She had little self-esteem and, therefore, she won the esteem of others. She felt herself to be a very insignificant person, to whom any kindness was a great favor—and so do young converts, if they are real and true. We meet with a certain class of them who are rather pert and forward, as the fashion of the day is

in certain quarters, and then we do not think so much of them as they do of themselves! But the genuine ones, who are truly renewed, who really hold out and continue to the end, are always humble.

And frequently they are very trembling, timid and diffident. They feel that they are not worthy to be put among the children and they come to the Lord's Table with holy wonder. I remember when I first went to the house of God as a Christian youth who had lately come to know the Lord. I looked with veneration on every officer and member of the Church! I thought them all, if not quite angels, yet very nearly as good! At any rate, I had no disposition to criticize them, for I felt myself to be so undeserving. I do not think that I have quite so high an idea of all professed Christians as I had, then, for I am afraid that I could not truthfully entertain it. But, for all that, I think far better of them than many are apt to do. I

believe that young people, when first brought to Christ, have so deep a sense of their own imperfection and know so little of the infirmities of others, that they look up to the members of the Church with a very high esteem— and this fixes upon such members, officers and pastors a great responsibility. Since these converts are lowly in their own eyes, it is proper and safe to encourage them.

Moreover, it is kind and necessary to do. Never be critical and severe with them, but deal tenderly with their budding gifts—a frosty sentence may nip them—a genial word will develop them. Our Lord bids you feed the lambs. Act the shepherd towards them and never overdrive them, lest they faint by the way. It is a lovely sight to see a matronly Christian cheering on her class of girls, bearing with their waywardness and folly, and fostering everything that is hopeful in them. These are the mothers in Israel to whom shall be honor! I love to see the advanced man of God giving a hearty grip to a youth, loving him, advising him—yes, and adding a word of praise when it can be judiciously applied. With unequal footsteps the raw recruits are trying to keep step with the better-trained soldiers. Let their comrades smile upon them and see in them the warriors of the future who shall rally to the standard when our warfare is ended.

Once more, the young convert is like Ruth because he has come to trust under the wings of Jehovah, the God of Israel. Here is a beautiful metaphor. You know that the wings of a strong bird, especially, and of any bird relatively, is strong. It makes a kind of arch and from the outer side you have the architectural idea of strength. Under the wings, even of so feeble a creature as a hen, there is a complete and perfect refuge for her little chicks, judging from without. And then the inside of the wing is lined with soft feathers for the comfort of the young. The interior of the wing is arranged as though it would prevent any friction from the strength of the wing to the weakness of the little bird. I do not know of a more snug place than under the wing feathers of the hen. Have you ever thought of this?

Would not the Lord have us, in time of trouble, come and cower down under the great wing of His Omnipotent Love, just as the chicks do under the mother? Here is the Scripture—"He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His truth shall be your shield and buckler." What a warm defense! When I have seen the little birds stick their heads out from under the feathers of their mother's breast, it has looked like the perfection of happiness! And when they have chirped their little notes, they have seemed to tell hr how warm and safe they were, though there may have been a rough wind blowing around the hen. They could not be happier than they are! If they run a little way, they are soon back, again, to the wing, for it is house and home to them—it is their shield and succor, defense and delight !

This is what our young converts have done. They have come, not to trust themselves, but to trust in Jesus. They have come to find a righteousness in Christ—yes, to find everything in Him—and so they are trusting, trusting under the wings of God! Is not this what you are

doing? You full-grown saints—is not this your condition? I know it is! Very well, then, encourage the younger sort to do what you delight to do! Say to them, "There is no place like this. Let us joyously abide together under the wings of God." There is no rest, no peace, no calm, no perfect quiet like that of giving up all care because you cast your care on God, renouncing all fear because your only fear is a fear of offending God! Oh the bliss of knowing that sooner may the universe be dissolved than the great heart that beats above you cease to be full of tenderness and love to all those that shelter beneath it! Faith, however little, is a precious garden of the Lord's right hand planting—do not trample on it, but tend it with care and water it with love.

II. But now I must come closer to the text. Having shown you what these converts have done to need encouragement,

I need, in the second place, to answer the question, WHAT IS THE FULL REWARD OF THOSE WHO COME TO

TRUST UNDER THE WINGS OF GOD?

I would answer that a full reward will come to us in that day when we lay down these bodies of flesh and blood, that they may sleep in Jesus, while our unclothed spirits are absent from the body but present with the Lord. In the disembodied state, we shall enjoy perfect happiness of spirit. But a fuller reward will be ours when the Lord shall come a second time and our bodies shall rise from the grave to share in the glorious reign of the descended King! Then, in our perfect manhood, we shall behold the face of Him we love and shall be like He! Then shall come the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body and we, as body, soul and spirit—a trinity in unity—shall be forever with Father, Son and Holy Spirit—our triune God! This unspeakable bliss is the full reward of trusting beneath the wings of Jehovah!

But there is a present reward and to that Boaz referred. There is, in this world, a present recompense for the godly, notwithstanding the fact that many are true afflictions of the righteous. Years ago a brother minister printed a book, "How to Make the Best of Both Worlds," which contained much wisdom. But, at the same time, many of us objected to the title as dividing the pursuit of the Believer and putting the two worlds too much on a level. Assuredly, it would be wrong for any godly man to make it his objective in life to make the best of both worlds in the way which the title is likely to suggest. This present world must be subordinate to the world to come and is to be cheerfully sacrificed to it if necessary. Yet, be it never forgotten, if any man will live unto God, he will make the best of both worlds, for godliness has the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come. Even in losing the present life for Christ's sake, we are saving it—and self-denial and taking up the Cross are but forms of blessedness. If we seek, first, the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all other things shall be added to us!

Do you ask me, "How shall we be rewarded for trusting in the Lord?" I answer, first, by the deep peace of conscience which He will grant you. Can any reward be better than this?

When a man can say, "I have sinned, but I am forgiven," is not that forgiveness an unspeakable reward? My sins were laid on Jesus and He took them away as my Scapegoat, so that they are gone forever and I am consciously absolved. Is not this a glorious assurance? Is it not worth worlds? A calm settles down upon the heart which is under the power of the blood of sprinkling! A voice within proclaims the peace of God and the Holy Spirit seals that peace by His own witness—and thus all is rest. If you were to offer all that you have, to buy this peace, you could not purchase it! And were it purchasable, it were worthwhile to forego the dowry of a myriad worlds to have it! If you had all riches and power and honor you could not reach the price of the Pearl of Peace!

The revenues of kingdoms could not purchase so much as a glance at this jewel. A guilty conscience is the undying worm of Hell. The torture of remorse is the fire that never can be quenched. He that has that worm gnawing at his heart and that fire burning in his bosom is already lost. On the other hand, he that trusts in God through Christ Jesus is delivered from inward Hell-pangs and the burning fever of unrest is cured. He may well sing for joy of soul, for Heaven is born within him and lies in his heart like the Christ in the manger. O harps of Glory, you ring out no sweeter note than that of transgression put away by the atoning Sacrifice!

That, however, is only the beginning of the Believer's reward. He that has come to trust in God shall be "quiet from fear of evil." What a blessing that must be! "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." When a man is at his very highest as to this world's joy, he hears the whisper of a dark spirit saying, "Will it last?" He peers into the morning with apprehension, for he knows not what may be lurking in his path. But when a man is no longer afraid, but is prepared to welcome whatever comes because he sees in it the appointment of a loving Father, why, then he is in a happy state! Suppose one went home tonight and found, as Job did, that all his estate had been burned or stolen and that his family had all died? What a splendid condition must he be in if he could say amid his natural agony, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"! Such possession of the soul in patience is one of the full rewards of faith. He that has it wears a nobler decoration within his breast than all the stars that royalty could bestow! Deliverance from the pangs of conscience and freedom from the griefs of fear make up a choice favor such as only God can give!

More than this—the man who trusts in God rests in Him with respect to all the supplies he now needs, or shall ever need. What happy music gladdens the green pastures of that 23rd Psalm! I am half inclined to ask you to rise and sing it, for my heart is leaping for joy while I rehearse the first stanza of it—

"The Lord my Shepherd is:
I shall be well supplied.
Since He is mine and I am His,

What can I need beside?"

Usually man is made up of needs—and he must have reached the land of abounding wealth who boldly asks, "What can I need beside?" We are never quite content. It always needs a little more to fill the cup to the brim, but only think of singing, "What can I need beside?" Is not this sweet content a full reward from the Lord in whom we trust? Human nature has swallowed a horseleech and, therefore, it cries night and day, "Give, give, give!" Who but the Lord can satisfy this craving? The vortex of dissatisfaction threatens to suck in the main ocean and still to remain unfilled, but the Lord rewards faith by satisfying its mouth with good things and making it sing—

"What need shall not our God supply
From His redundant stores?
What streams of mercy from on high
An arm almighty pours!"

I cannot imagine a fuller present reward than complete rest from all anxiety and calm confidence in a Providence which ran never fail!

Another part of the Believer's great gain lies in the consciousness that all things are working together for His good. Nothing is, after all, able to injure us. Neither pains of body, nor sufferings of mind, nor losses in business, nor cruel blows of death can work us real ill. The thefts of robbers, the mutterings of slanderers, the changes of trade, the rage of the elements shall all be overruled for good! These many drugs and poisons, compounded in the mortar of the unerring Chemist, shall produce a healthy potion for our souls! "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." It is a great joy to know this to be an unquestionable fact and to watch, with expectation, to see it repeated in our own case. It takes the sting out, at once, of all these wasps that otherwise would have worried us. And it transforms them into bees, each one gathering honey for us! Is not this a reward for which a man may well forego the flatteries of sin? O Faith, you enrich and ennoble all who entertain you!

Then, let me tell you, they that trust in God and follow Him have another full reward and that is, the bliss of doing good. Can any happiness excel this? This joy is a diamond of the first water! Match me, if you can, the joy of helping the widow and the fatherless! Find me the equal of the delight of saving a soul from death and covering a multitude of sins! It were worth worlds to have faith in God, even if we lived here forever, if our sojourn could be filled up with doing good to the poor and needy and rescuing the erring and fallen. If you desire to taste the purest joy that ever flowed from the fountains of Paradise, drink of the unselfish bliss of saving a lost soul! When faith in God teaches you to forego self and live wholly to glorify God and benefit your fellow men, it puts you on the track of the Lord of angels and, by following it, you will come to reign with Him.

There has lately passed away from our midst on this side of the river one who, in his earlier days, knew the curse of drunkenness, but was led, by hearing the Gospel in the street, to seek and find a Savior and so to escape from the bondage of an evil habit. He became a Christian temperance man, devoting himself—I was about to say every day in the week, to the cause—for I think he did so! All his spare time was spent for that sacred purpose. He has lately passed away, but not without having enjoyed a reward from his God. When I used to look into the face of our friend, Mr. Thorniloe, I felt that he had received a full return for casting himself upon the Lord, for the joy of his heart shone in his countenance and delight in his work caused it to be his recreation! O drunk, if you could become such as he was, total abstinence would be no trial, but a pleasure! O idle professor, if you would be as diligent in serving your Lord as he was, life would be music to you! He who has, himself, fallen into a sin, should find his chief joy in seeking to reclaim others from the same condemnation. And in doing so, he will light upon clouds of happiness and flocks of joys! As a shepherd rejoices most when he has found his straying sheep, so will you who trust in the Lord, if you will, in the future, lay yourselves out to pluck men from eternal ruin.

Brothers and Sisters, there remains the singular and refined joy which comes of a humble perception of personal growth. Children rejoice when they find that they are growing more like their parents and may soon hope to be strong and full-grown. Most of us remember our childish mirth when we began to wear garments which we thought would make us look like men! When I first wore boots and walked through the stubble with my big uncle, I felt that I was somebody! That, of course, was childish pride—but it has its commendable analogy in the pleasure of gathering spiritual strength and becoming equal to higher labors and deeper experiences! When you find that you do not lose your temper under provocation, as you did a year ago, you are humbly thankful. When an evil lust is driven away and no longer haunts you, you are quietly joyful, rejoicing with trembling. When you have sustained a trial which once would have crushed you, the

victory is exceedingly sweet. Every advance in holiness is an advance in secret happiness! To be a little more meet for Heaven is to have a little more of Heaven in the heart! As we mellow for the celestial garner, we are conscious of a more pervading sweetness which, in itself, is no mean reward of virtue.

Let me tell you another splendid part of this full reward, and that is to have prevalence with God in prayer. Somebody called me, in print, a hypocrite, because I said that God had heard my prayers. This was evidently malicious—a man might be called fanatical for such a statement, but I cannot see the justice of imputing hypocrisy on that account! If by hypocrisy he meant a sincere conviction that the great God answers prayer, I will be more and more hypocritical as long as I live! I will glory in the name of God—the God That Hears My Prayer! If that writer had claimed that he prayed and had been heard, it is possible that he would have been guilty of hypocrisy—of that matter, he is personally the best informed,

and I leave the question with him. But he has no right to measure my corn with his bushel. Certainly, I shall not use his bushel to measure my corn, but I shall speak what I know and am persuaded of! In deep sincerity I can bear testimony that the Lord hears prayer and that it is His desire to do so!

Many a saint of God has but to ask and have. When such men wrestle with God in prayer, they always prevail like Israel of old at Jabbok, when he grasped the Angel and would not let Him go without a blessing. If you have got this power to the fullest, you will often say to yourself, "If I have nothing else but power at the Throne of Grace, I have more than enough to recompense me for every self-denial." What are the jests and jeers of an ungodly and ignorant world in comparison with the honor of being favored of the Lord to ask what we will and receive the utmost of our desires?

Many other items make up the full of the reward, but perhaps the chief of all is communion with God—to be permitted to speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend—to be led by the Divine Bridegroom to sit down in the banqueting house while His banner over us is Love. Those who dwell outside the palace of Love know nothing about our secret ecstasies and raptures. We cannot tell them much about our spiritual delights, for they would only turn, again, and tear us. The delights of heavenly fellowship are too sacred to be commonly displayed. There is a joy, the clearest example of Heaven below, when the soul becomes as the chariot of Amminadib by the energy of the Holy Spirit! I believe, Brothers and Sisters, that our lot, even when we are poor and sorrowful and cast down, is infinitely to be preferred to that of the loftiest emperor who does not know the Savior!

Oh, poor kings, poor princes, poor peers, poor gentry that do not know Christ! But happy paupers that know Him! Happy slaves that love Him! Happy dying men and women that rejoice in Him! Those have solid joy and lasting pleasure who have God to be their All in All. Come, then, and put your trust under the wings of God and you shall be blessed in your body and in your soul! You shall be blessed in your house and in your family! You shall be blessed in your basket and in your store—blessed in your sickness and in your health, blessed in time and in eternity—for the righteous are blessed of the Lord and their offspring with them!

My prayer for every young convert is the benediction of Boaz, "The Lord recompense your work, and a full reward be given you of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you are come to trust." May this benediction rest on each one of you forever.

III. Finally, WHAT FIGURE SETS FORTH THIS FULL REWARD? What was the full reward that Ruth obtained? I do not think that Boaz knew the full meaning of what he said. He could not foresee all that was appointed of the Lord. In the light of Ruth's history, we will read the good man's blessing. This poor stranger, Ruth, in coming to put her trust in the God of Israel, was giving up everything. Yes, but she was also gaining everything. If she could have looked behind the veil which hides the future, she could not have conducted

herself more to her own advantage than she did! She had no prospect of gain. She followed Naomi expecting poverty and obscurity, but, in doing that which was right, she found the blessing which makes rich! She lost her Moabite kindred, but she found a noble kinsman in Israel. She left the home of her fathers in the other land to find a heritage among the chosen tribes, a heritage redeemed by one who loved her! Ah, when you come to trust in Christ, you find, in the Lord Jesus Christ, One who is next of kin to you, who redeems your heritage and unites you to Himself! You thought that He was a stranger. You were afraid to approach Him, but He comes near to you and you find yourself near to His heart and one with Him forever.

Yes, this is a fair picture of each convert's reward. Ruth found what she did not look for. She found a husband. It was exactly what was for her comfort and her joy, for she found rest in the house of her husband and she became possessed of his large estate by virtue of her marriage union with him. When a poor sinner trusts in God, he does not expect so

great a reward, but, to his surprise, his heart finds a husband, a home and an inheritance priceless beyond all concep-tion—and all this is found in Christ Jesus our Lord! Then is the soul brought into loving, living, lasting, indissoluble union with the Well-Beloved, the unrivalled Lord of Love! We are one with Jesus! What a glorious mystery is this!

Ruth obtained an inheritance among the chosen people of Jehovah. She could not have obtained it except through Boaz, who redeemed it for her, but thus she came into indisputable possession of it. When a poor soul comes to God, he thinks that he is flying to Him only for a refuge, but, indeed, he is coming for much more. He is coming for an undefiled heritage that fades not. He becomes an heir of God, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ!

As I conclude, I bear this, my personal testimony, to the benefit of godliness for this life. Apart from the glories of Heaven, I would wish to live trusting in my God and resting in Him for this present life since I need His present aid for every day as truly as I shall need it at the last day. Men speak of secularism as attending to the things which concern our present life and I am bold to assert that the purest and best secularism is that which trusts itself with God for things immediately around us! We shall be wise to make secular things sacred by trusting them with God. Faith is not for eternity, alone, but for this fleeting hour, also—it is good for the shop and for the marketplace—for the field and for the domestic hearth. For the cares of the moment, as well as for everything else, we take refuge under the wings of God! There shall we be blessed, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ruth 2:1-14; Proverbs 3